A CHRISTMAS-BOX,

FOR THE

FREEMEN and BURGESSES

OF

Shrewsbury.

PRICE SIX-PENCE.

30
60
APR

Shrewsbury Election.

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CHRISTMAS-BOX,

FOR THE

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OF

Shrewsbury.

By BALAAM's ASS.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

Luke ii. 13, 14.

And the Lord opened the Mouth of the Ass.

Num. xxii. 28.

☞ The Author presents this little Book, *Gratis*, to every Voter that *chooses* to accept of it; though at the same Time he feels himself under the Necessity of hinting to the Opulent, that his Finances will not permit him to give away many without Inconvenience, and that, should any Profits arise from the Sale, they will be applied to the Use of the Salop Infirmary.

SHREWSBURY: Printed by T. WOOD.

1796.

A

CHRISTMAS-STORY

and

Sketch.

A

CHRISTMAS-BOX, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

IF you knew the ſentiments of my heart, I ſhould have no occaſion to requeſt you to give a candid reception to this addreſs, the ſole deſign of which is to make you *happy*. It is, I am concerned to ſay, an arduous undertaking, to diffuſe ſuch an ineſtimable bleſſing as happineſs, among ſo great a multitude, among men too of various paſſions, prejudices, and inclinations; I am willing, however, to make the attempt, being aſſured that if this little book does you no good, at leaſt it can do you no harm, and that is much more than many a doctor, who thinks himſelf mighty wiſe, can ſay of his preſcriptions.

When I was a child, my nurſe uſed to tell me, that a little bird whiſpered ſuch and ſuch things in her ear. The name of that little bird is Report, and it has brought to me from time to time within this twelve month, many a curious tale from Shrewſbury. I dare not affirm, that all my intelligence is true, yet

yet I have reaſon to believe the greater part is, ſo that I ſhall have good ground to go upon in the courſe of this addreſs.

The chief import of what my little meſſenger has informed me, is this: That there has been a moſt ſerious conteſt for the Borough of Shrewſbury, between the two great houſes of Attingham and Hawkſtone, or Hawkſtone and Attingham, if you like it better, for I deſire we may have no diſputes about precedency, and that it has at laſt ended in favor of the Hon. Wm. Hill, brother to the Noble Lord at Attingham. This termination has, I underſtand, given conſiderable offence to both parties; to the friends of Mr. John Hill, becauſe, they ſay, they confidently expected, that a Petition, which he pledged himſelf to preſent to Parliament, would have ſecured their Rights, and conſequently have rendered his Election valid; and to the friends of Mr. William Hill, leſt he ſhould have entered into a Compromiſe, without due reſpect to former engagements. Thus matters ſtand, I believe, at preſent; my attempt is to mend them, (for bad indeed muſt that be which cannot be mended) and I hope you will patiently go on, bearing in mind that my deſign is to make you *happy*.

As Mr. John Hill was your old Member, I ſhall firſt make his Conduct undergo a Scrutiny; and here I muſt beg your indulgence, becauſe I am no lawyer, and do not judge of right and wrong by old Statute Books, if

therefore I ſhould here and there uſe an uncouth phraſe, taken from a valuable and eminent Volume, not much ſtudied in the precincts of the Temple, while the Priſoner at the Bar is ſtanding his Trial, I hope you will conſider the ſenſe rather than the ſound, and ſuffer me to proceed without interruption.

Mr. John Hill was your Repreſentative during two Seſſions of Parliament, and he was, if my information be right, preſſed by many reſpectable friends to accept of that very honorable ſituation. Here I ſtop to make my obſervations, for not being remarkably active, unleſs I proceed cautiouſly ſtep by ſtep, I may tumble down and break my ſhins. Every Elector has, I preſume a *right* to chooſe the Repreſentative he likes beſt, but he *ought* to chooſe the man of virtue, and integrity, the man of buſineſs, and of ability, to diſcharge the important office with which he is entruſted. It would be an inſult to you, Gentlemen, to ſuppoſe, that you did not, upon this occaſion, act from the moſt upright motives; I ſhall therefore take it for granted, that Mr. J. Hill was a man, whoſe character was deſervedly held in high eſtimation.—Being called forth in a manner, that reflected ſo much honor both to his ſupporters and himſelf, I think he did right to forego for a while the ſweet ſolace of domeſtic life, and enter upon the toil of public buſineſs. He did not want an excuſe to turn his back upon

a peevish, crofs-grained, fcolding woman, but was torn from the fociety of one of the moft amiable of wives, and the moft affectionate of mothers; and he could not, without regret, leave a numerous family, who laboured to requite the tender foliciude of parental affection, and emulate each other in every office of kindnefs and good-will. That Mr. J. Hill fhould fpend as much time with this family as he could, conftently with his duty, is not to be wondered at, and therefore, if he happened to be abfent during the difcuffion of any important bufinefs, I think it can hardly be conftrued into a ferious offence. You will probably allow that he was in general attentive to Parliamentary bufinefs, and ever ready to comply with the wifhes of his Conftituents. Indeed your Election of him a fecond time was a fufficient proof of this, and nothing could more ftrongly mark the univerfal approbation given to his conduct, than that no one was invited to oppofe him. Now let us go a ftep farther.

A few months previous to the late Diffolution of Parliament, Mr. W. Hill, with the conſent and approbation of many Gentlemen of weight and fortune, announced himfelf a Candidate for the Borough, while the Old Member, fupported by another fet of Gentlemen, defired to remain in his honourable fituation. Here was fomething, in my opinion, *wrong* in both Candidates. It was *wrong* for Relations, who had lived fo long upon terms

terms of friendship, to oppose each other. Both were too hasty, and both too ambitious; and however urged to proceed, they should have been more cautious, and more deliberate. The next time a Contention arises between them, I shall beg leave to recommend to their consideration the very gentleman-like conduct of Abram to his Nephew Lot. "Abram said unto Lot, let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me, if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." *Gen.* xiii. 8, 9. It may be, Mr. J. Hill's former supporters thought he had enjoyed his honor long enough; that he was grown saucy and ought to retire, or they might have motives, which it would be impertinent in me, as well as foreign to my purpose, to scrutinize. The unfortunate Contest was began, the flames of civil war were kindled, and the Town of Shrewsbury became the scene of action. Vollies of rancour, malice, and envy, were fired off, and many were wounded in the conflict. Fathers, sons, brothers, friends, were enlisted on either side, and every social bond broken, or destroyed. Was this *right?* Was this *defensible?* No; for it is the very reverse of that incomparable precept, which the PRINCE OF PEACE gave to his disciples; "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."

them." *Mat.* vii. 12. I reflect with concern, on the ſcenes of riot, profligacy and diſorder, that took place upon this occaſion, and cannot but lament that ſuch vaſt ſums ſhould be expended in meaſures ſo unproductive of any real good to ſociety. But the Combatants acted then, as I have acted in times paſt, and as many yet act, without a due regard to conſequences. They were told, and they took the doctrine upon truſt, that conqueſt has glory; onward they ruſhed through toils, through dangers, and through difficulties almoſt innumerable, till they were both enfeebled, both almoſt exhauſted. Victory at laſt declared in favor of - - Whom ſhall I ſay? I know not, for both claimed it, like France and Auſtria in ſome of their late dreadful ſtruggles. Mr. J. Hill might indeed be ſaid to have received a check, but he publiſhed his Manifeſto, declaring, that nothing ſhould deter him from reaping the laurels with which you, Gentlemen, offered to adorn his brow. A ſuſpenſion of hoſtilities, by which both Generals ſought to rally their ſcattered forces, now took place, and afforded an opportunity for deep reflection and mature conſideration. Here let us drop the metaphor, and become more ſerious, for indeed the ſubject requires it.

Lord Berwick, and his Hon. Brother, had now partly gratified their ambition, and as they deemed the Petition "frivolous and vexatious," they ſhortly expected, that a Committee of the Houſe of Commons would

crown

crown their wiſhes with ſucceſs. Whether this was a ſufficient Compenſation for the ſums which they had expended, let them judge; but if I were permitted to give my opinion, I ſhould ſay, that a Seat in the ſplendid and beautiful Manſion of Attingham, was preferable to a Seat in St. Stephens, and that it was better to live in ſocial happineſs among my country neighbours, than to be baniſhed to the ſmoaky Metropolis, and two or three times in the year make my bow among a crowd of Courtiers at St. James's. The Memory of the late Lord Berwick muſt doubtleſs be dear to you, and to the Inhabitants of Shrewſbury in general; he had his faults, and who has not? but he was genenerous and benevolent. The diſtreſſed were acquainted with his character, and he made them feel his friendſhip. Under his auſpices, your trade flouriſhed; his houſe was open to you, and his hoſpitable board was loaded with plenty. His family have reaſon to regret, and perhaps will do ſo long, that he was taken ſo ſoon from them. Titles dazzle and wealth intoxicates, and I ſhall ſay nothing derogatory to the Honor of the preſent Lord, if I obſerve that he felt his dignity, that he felt his influence. It is natural to man, and particularly to youth, to do ſo. It was his misfortune, that he wanted the counſel of maturer age to form and to direct his plans. When you conſider the vaſt ſums that he laviſhed in the late deplorable Conteſt, you muſt regret, that he is diſabled, for a time at leaſt,

leaſt, from treading in thoſe ſteps that made his late honored Father ſo much beloved and ſo much reſpected. Who now can caſt an eye upon the beautiful Edifice at Attingham, without dropping a tear for its Noble Owner? How cold and comfortleſs is it's aſpect!—while every houſe within it's ſphere of influence feels a ſhivering ſympathy on the occaſion. But let us ſee whether Mr. John Hill, or his Brother Sir Richard, were in a better condition.

The hurry of the buſineſs was over, and they had now ſufficient leiſure to ſit down, and count the coſt. They had the ſeveral bills laid before them, and ſaw thouſands riſe on thouſands till the ſum total amounted, as ſome ſay, to 100,000l. as others, *only* to fifty or ſixty thouſand. They had time alſo to meditate upon the advantages reſulting from the ſteps which had been taken, and how much their ſatisfaction was likely to be increaſed upon the concluſion of the whole buſineſs. Sir Richard's charities are well known; an ample fortune affording him the means of viſiting the fatherleſs and widows, and of communicating relief to many that are in need. He has, I underſtand upwards of twenty Nephews and Nieces, and that his purſe has always been open to pay for their education, and to ſupply their wants. As many of thoſe relations are ſtill young and dependant upon his bounty, how muſt he feel at having, at leaſt, greatly diminiſhed, if he has not totally

loſt,

loſt, his power of aſſiſting them; but how much more muſt Mr. J. Hill, who is next heir to Sir Richard's Eſtate, be diſtreſſed! He has Thirteen Children, and was always eſteemed a moſt tender and affectionate parent; indeed he has reaſon to be ſo, for I have the beſt authority for affirming, that all his family are bleſſed with moſt amiable diſpoſitions, and conform to his will with the greateſt chearfulneſs and alacrity; of this, their conduct during the Election, afforded ſufficient proof; for when they ſaw their Patrimony toſſed abroad into the hands of perſons totally unknown to them, not one murmer eſcaped their lips, not one ſign of diſcontent marked their conduct. It was their Father's choice, and they approved.

However ſituated Mr. J. Hill was, he determined to go on with his Petition; but as a conſiderable time intervened before it could be preſented, he arranged his plan with much caution and prudence, that he might have the ſurer grounds to go upon, and might curtail the expence as much as poſſible.—Upon conſulting his own Counſel, as alſo ſome other Gentlemen very eminent in the law, he unexpectedly found the undertaking clog'd with many difficulties; the proſpect of ſucceſs was far from clear, while it was certain, that the additional expence would be very conſiderable. I can eaſily conceive Mr. John Hill exceedingly embarraſſed and diſtreſſed under theſe circumſtances. The obligation,

which

which he felt towards his Conſtituents, induced him to abide by a raſh promiſe, made in a paſſionate moment, without due conſideration, while the intereſt of his family, who ſhould, (pardon the expreſſion) be *moſt dear* to him, threw a ſtrong biaſs on the contrary ſide. That he had done wrong in going ſo far, I am ready to grant, and I cannot think he will endeavour to exculpate himſelf; but what, as a *Parent*, and as a *Man of Honor could* he do now, but hold a conference with his Opponent, to try, if terms of accommodation might not be agreed upon, even in this late ſtage of the buſineſs? Many things might be propoſed, reſpecting the ſeveral queſtions which a Committee of the Houſe of Commons would have for their diſcuſſion; it might be aſked too, if ſome of them could not be omited in order to leſſon the expence to both parties; but as my little meſſenger has brought me no correct information upon this head, I can only ſay, that Mr. J. Hill found the proſecution of his ſcheme exceedingly difficult, if not impracticable, and therefore thought it beſt to leave his Opponent in the quiet poſſeſſion of his honorable ſituation. But he did not this without all the equivalents that it was in his *power* to obtain. It was acknowledged, that in too many inſtances, a groſs partiality had been ſhewn, and that all *poſſible* means ſhould be taken to ſatisfy thoſe Electors, who complained of an infringement of their Rights. Mr. J. Hill *wiſhed* to do more, but as he *could* not, who will blame him?

him? That Mr. Wm. Hill ſhould accede to any propoſals of accommodation, is not ſurprizing; it muſt be the very thing that he moſt ardently deſired; and I hope, thoſe Gentlemen, who have ſo warmly, and ſo ſucceſsfully ſupported his cauſe, in the late Conteſt, will congratulate him upon the happy reconciliation that has taken place.

But it ſeems, there are many exceedingly diſpleaſed with Mr. J. Hill, for not doing what he *could* not, or, ſuppoſing he *could*, for not *trying* to do his Family *farther injury*. O! but, you will ſay, he might have ſecured our Rights for a moderate expence, that would have done his Family *little* harm! Well;—be it ſo, I do not diſpute the point with you; though, if I had a Vote for Shrewſbury, I ſhould be ſorry to have it eſtabliſhed upon *any* injury done to another. But pray, Gentlemen, what have you loſt? If it be a real permanent advantage, then be ſerious, be ſorrowful, and I will ſympathize with your misfortunes; but if otherwiſe, as I ſhall endeavor to prove, pray trouble yourſelves no more upon this occaſion.

Had the Petition been heard, you might *poſſibly* have obtained your wiſhes in the three following points. You might have had a Vote for the Borough of Shrewſbury, have had Mr. J. Hill for your Repreſentative during the preſent Seſſions of Parliament, and a liberty of exerciſing your right of franchiſe upon any future occaſion.

Now

Now allow me to ask, in the first place, what *good* it will do you to have a vote for Shrewsbury, can it possibly make you any *wiser* or any *better*? No certainly, you will say, we dont expect that. What then? Will it make you *happier*? Yes; as a guinea in the hand of its possessor, its value is not known till it is laid out. Well then, I will suppose that you are so *happy* as to have this *good thing* called a vote; what will you do with it? Why, say the Majority, *(the glorious Majority of 44)* we will give it to Mr. J. Hill, and he shall be our Member; and why to him? Is he a man of *more* virtue and integrity than your present Representatives? Is he *more* active in business, and is he *more* concerned to maintain the interests of the nation in general, and of the Town of Shrewsbury in particular? Unless you can prove this, which for the credit of Sir Wm. Pulteney and Mr. Wm. Hill, I hope you cannot, the freedom of which you talk would be a dangerous privilege in your hands. In these critical times, the Senators of Great Britain should be men of exemplary character, men, who will stem the torrent of currupt influence, and restore, as far as in them lies, our happy Constitution to its ancient purity and vigor. I say not, however, that Mr. J. Hill is the *inferior* of the two late Opponents. Charity induces me to hope, they are *equally* worthy of your suffrages, and in that case, it *ought* to be perfectly *indifferent* to you which of them is in Parliament. But, should any of you have strong proof of Mr.

J. Hill's

J. Hill's *Merit*, and Mr. W. Hill's *Demerit*, I heartily condole with you upon the termination of the Election. But there is another point to be conſidered: Had your ſuppoſed Right been eſtabliſhed, you would not only have had your favorite Member *now*, but alſo the liberty of exerciſing your privilege upon *future occaſions*.

Whether this, to you, Gentlemen, that are called Out-Voters, would have been an advantage, may be much doubted; on my part indeed, I can entertain no doubt at all upon the ſubject; for I am perſuaded it would have been a *real injury*; perhaps not to independent Gentlemen, who form the ſmalleſt part of your body, but to all honeſt and induſtrious Tradeſmen. Unleſs I am miſtaken, you muſt feel, that avocation from buſineſs, has a tendency to diſſipate the mind, eſpecially when engaged in the riotous ſcenes of a Conteſted Election; and in ſuch ſcenes, I am afraid ſome have ſuffered almoſt irreparable loſs, for drunkenneſs, gluttony, and tumult, which prevailed too much at the late Election, ſo terribly corrupt the morals, that he who has been once addicted to them, can with difficulty be brought back to habits of domeſtic life. Had your Right of Voting been confirmed, theſe temptations might be oftener thrown in your way, therefore I think your preſent ſituation better as it is; for, as it is written in the Chriſtian's Daily Prayer, "Lead us not

into temptation," you ſhould thank GOD, that he has taken a dangerous temptation out of your way. But I muſt beg leave to remark farther, that this Right of Voting, upon which you ſeem to lay ſo much ſtreſs, might in future never have been exerciſed. A Conteſted Election is a rare thing, and I ſhould think that the enormous ſums which have been expended upon the laſt, would be a warning to the Shropſhire Gentlemen not haſtily to engage in another. Once in three or four Seſſions ſuch a thing *may* occur, ſo that twenty or more years may elapſe, ere you are called upon to vote again. But twenty years hence who will be alive to vote? and of how little conſequence will the tranſactions of this year be to thoſe, who ſhall then be numbered with the dead! will they care who has yielded, and who has triumphed? No; but they will regret that their thoughts, which might have been employed on better things, were laviſhed in ſuch unprofitable purſuits.

I ſtrolled not long ſince into a Country Church-yard, while the Miniſter was performing the funeral ſervice. There were ſeveral ſpectators of the ſolemn ſcene, one of which attracted my particular notice. He was a good-looking young man, tho' evidently altered by anxiety and fatigue. His countenance indicated the ſtrongeſt emotions of ſoul, and while his eye was fixed upon the Coffin which the attendants were letting down into the earth,

of Providence to teach them to renounce all ſublunary enjoyment as the chief good, and to ſeek the pleaſures which are to be found at

earth, he ſtrove in vain to ſuppreſs the tear that bedewed his cheek; it was a tribute of affection to a beloved parent: his intereſting figure, tho' unnoticed by the crowd, caught the eye of the Miniſter, and touched his heart with ſympathy; his voice faultered, and I was afraid his too great ſenſibility would have become ſtill more diſtreſſing, but tears relieved him, and he finiſhed the ſervice without further inconvenience.

—As I had been previouſly conſidering the vanities of human life, and as many circumſtances attendant upon the late Election had formed a part of my meditations, I wiſhed the Candidates, their friends, and the whole body of Electors to have been ſpectators of ſuch a ſcene; it would I think, have ſolemnized their minds; have diverted their thoughts to more important things; and, if their hearts ever felt the heavenly grace of pity, would have ſtung them with remorſe, that inſtead of alleviating the ſorrows of the poor and wretched, they ſhould ſquander in ſcenes of riot the riches which the hand of providence had beſtowed upon them.

Many were diſappointed, and ſome, I believe enraged at the termination of the Conteſt; and it is well (pardon the expreſſion) I repeat it, it is well. When men ſet their hearts upon any worldly thing, it is good for them not to obtain it; it is a leſſon

your minds as ſtrongly upon the cloſing ſcene of life, and anticipate, if you can, the triumph

ſublunary enjoyment as the chief good, and to ſeek the pleaſures which are to be found at God's right hand for evermore. In the beginning of this addreſs, I told you, that it was my deſign to make you *happy*, and I am ſure, I cannot do it more effectually, than by beſeeching you to leave the things that are temporal in order that you may ſeek thoſe that are eternal. Set your affections upon theſe, and you ſhall not be diſappointed.—The great God whom you worſhip, foreknows every event, and therefore you need not be apprehenſive, that he ſhould revoke his promiſes. "Aſk, ſays he, and ye ſhall have, ſeek, and ye ſhall find," pardon, peace, happineſs and eternal glory. My mind was once as reſtleſs as yours, and I tried to amuſe myſelf with various toys: I was like a Child over his play-things; when I loſt one, I was ready to cry, and when I got another I ſoon grew tired of it. But I fortunately learnt, that I had fixed my heart upon improper objects; I therefore changed my purſuits; I ſought, and found the bleſſings which God promiſes, and which, I think, muſt bring more ſolid happineſs than either the poſſeſſion of a vote, or the highly rated honor of repreſenting a ſociety of dying men.

You once fixed your minds ſtrongly upon the concluſion of the Election, and anticipated with pleaſure the triumph of the day. Fix your

your minds as strongly upon the closing scene of life, and anticipate, if you can, the triumph of that hour. You may then recollect the anger, the hatred, and the malice that in times past rankled in your bosom; you may call to mind with bitterness of soul the scenes of dissipation in which you have been engaged, and tremble lest the threatenings of a just and holy GOD, who warned you against these things, should be immediately put in execution.—But I address you, that you may avoid these horrors; I write to inform you, that GOD is gracious, long-suffering, and full of compassion,—and that he willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live; therefore, I beseech you to repent and implore the pardon of your sins through JESUS CHRIST, in whose Name alone forgiveness is granted. You are now going to celebrate the Nativity of this divine SAVIOUR, this PRINCE of PEACE; and I intreat for *His Sake*, that all animosities may be laid aside. Have you been injured? Then as *Christians* you are bound to forgive. "How oft (says Peter), shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?—I say not unto thee, (says Christ), till seven times, but until seventy times seven." *Matt.* xviii. 21, 22.—Shall we say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," and yet die unforgiving? Gracious GOD!—"Pardon our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and turn their hearts." Our Religion

proclaims it's divine origin by the ſublimity of it's precepts; it is by forſaking them, that wild anarchy and confuſion ſtalk abroad, and infidelity becomes more bold and inſolent. Hear how St. Paul ſpeaks to thoſe who profeſſed the faith of CHRIST at Coloſſe, and receive inſtruction from the admirable leſſon; "But now you alſo put off all theſe, anger, wrath, malice, blaſphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, ſeeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but CHRIST is all, and in all. Put on therefore, (as the elect of GOD holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, long-ſuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel againſt any: even as CHRIST forgave you, ſo alſo do ye. And above all things, put on Charity, which is the bond of perfectneſs.—And let the peace of GOD rule in your hearts, to which alſo ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful." *Coloſſians* iii. 8—15.

Now permit me to beg again, for the ſake of our common Saviour, that his amiable religion may take deep root in your hearts. I aſk in *His Name* that every perſon diſtreſſed by

by those in authority, may be received into favor, that every honest tradesman, who has been dismissed may enjoy his former business, and that every housekeeper who has been turned out, may be reinstated in his old habitation, or at least compensated for the trouble and inconvenience which he has sustained? Can you, when I ask in *Such a Name*, refuse me the favor?——You will now I hope allow that the tendency of this address is to make you *peaceable*, *contented*, and *happy*. My little Messenger still hovers over the town of Shrewsbury, and, should he bring me the pleasing intelligence, that a general Reconciliation has taken place, it would I assure you, give me no small degree of satisfaction.

You will probably be desirous of knowing why I have assumed so singular a name, and I will readily comply with your wishes: I acknowledge myself to be the creature and the servant of God, yet naturally *slow of speech*, so that I am unable to express my ideas with that perspicuity and eloquence which many others possess. While I was envying the abilities of some of my acquaintance, I met with an observation to the following effect,——That the *Devil* made use of the *wise Serpent* to *deceive* mankind, while God opened the mouth of the *stupid Ass* to *correct* a prophet. I was highly pleased with this idea, and became more contented with

my talent, which I have now laid out, according to the ability which GOD has given me, to promote your *happineſs*, and with the moſt ſincere wiſhes that you may enjoy it during this ſacred feſtival,

I ſubſcribe myſelf,

With ſincere regard,

GENTLEMEN,

Your affectionate Friend
and humble Servant,

BALAAM's ASS.

Chriſtmas-Eve,
1796.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

THE following beautiful Poem, tranſlated by Dr. Hawkſworth, from the French of the late King of Pruſſia, is ſo well adapted to the reflections contained in the foregoing addreſs, that I ſhall make no apology for introducing it.

ODE TO DEATH.

YET a few *years*, or *days* perhaps,
Or *moments* paſs with ſilent lapſe,
And time to me ſhall be no more;
No more the ſun theſe eyes ſhall view,
Earth o'er theſe limbs her duſt ſhall ſtrew,
And life's fantaſtic dream be o'er.

Alas! I touch the dreadful brink,
From Nature's verge impell'd I ſink,
And endleſs darkneſs wraps me round;
Yes, Death is ever at my hand,
Faſt by my bed he takes his ſtand,
And conſtant at my board is found.

Earth,

Earth, air, and fire, and water join,
Againſt this fleeting life of mine,
And where for ſuccour can I fly?
If Art with flattering wiles pretend
To ſhield me like a guardian friend,
By Art, ere Nature bids, I die.

I ſee this tyrant of the mind
This idol fleſh to duſt confign'd,
Once call'd from duſt by Pow'r Divine;
Its features change, 'tis pale, 'tis cold,
Hence dreadful ſpectre! to behold
Thy aſpect, is to make it mine.

And can I then with guilty pride,
Which fear, nor ſhame, can quell or hide,
This fleſh ſtill pamper and adorn!
Thus viewing what I ſoon *ſhall be*,
Can what I *am* demand the knee,
Or look on aught around with ſcorn?

But then this Spark that warms, that guides,
That lives, that thinks, what fate betides?
Can this be duſt, a kneaded clod!
This yield to Death! the Soul, the mind,
That meaſures heav'n, and mounts the wind,
That knows at once itſelf and God?

Great CAUSE of all, above, below,
Who knows Thee muſt for ever know,
Immortal and Divine!
Thy image on my ſoul impreſt,
Of endleſs being is the teſt,
And bids Eternity be mine!

Tranſ-

Tranſporting thought! but am I ſure
That endleſs life will joy ſecure?
Joy's only to the juſt decreed!
The guilty wretch expiring, goes
Where vengeance endleſs life beſtows,
That endleſs miſ'ry may ſucceed.

Great God, how awful is the ſcene!
A breath, a tranſient breath between;
And can I jeſt, and laugh, and play?
To earth, alas! too firmly bound,
Trees deeply rooted in the ground,
Are ſhiver'd when they're torn away.

Vain joys, which envy'd greatneſs gains,
How do ye bind with ſilken chains,
Which aſk Herculean ſtrength to break!
How with new terrors have ye arm'd
The pow'r, whoſe ſlighteſt glance alarm'd?
How many deaths of one ye make!

Yet, dumb with wonder, I behold
Man's thoughtleſs race in error bold,
Forget or ſcorn the *laws* of Death:
With *theſe* no projects coincide,
Nor vows, nor toils, nor hopes, they guide,
Each thinks he draws immortal breath.

Each blind to Fate's approaching hour,
Intrigues, or fights, for wealth or pow'r.
And ſlumb'ring dangers dare provoke:
And he who tott'ring ſcarce ſuſtains,
A century's age, plans future gains,
And feels an unexpected ſtroke,

Go

Go on, unbridled deſp'rate band,
Scorn rocks, gulphs, wind, ſearch ſea and land,
And ſpoil new worlds wherever found:
Seize, haſte to ſeize the glitt'ring prize,
And ſighs, and tears, and pray'rs deſpiſe,
Nor ſpare the Temple's holy ground.

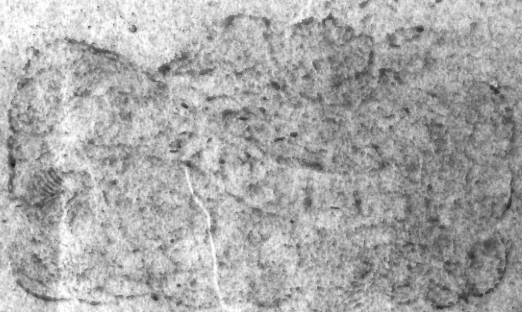
They go, ſucceed, but look again,
The deſp'rate hand you ſeek in vain,
Now trod in duſt the peaſants ſcorn.
But who that ſaw their treaſures ſwell,
That heard th' infatiate vow rebel,
Would e'er have thought them mortal born?

See the world's victor mount his car,
Blood marks his progreſs wide and far,
Sure he ſhall reign while ages fly;
No, vaniſh'd like a morning cloud,
The hero was but juſt allow'd
To fight, to conquer, and to die.

And is it true, I aſk with dread,
That nations heap'd on nations bled
Beneath his chariot's ſervid wheel,
With trophies to adorn the ſpot,
Where his pale corſe was left to rot,
And doom'd the hungry reptile's meal?

Yes, Fortune weary'd with her play,
Her toy, this hero, caſts away,
And ſcarce the form of man is ſeen:
Awe chills my breaſt, my eyes o'erflow,
Around my brows no roſes glow,
The cypreſs mine, funereal green!

Yet in this hour of grief and fears,
When aweful Truth unvei'ld appears,
Some pow'r unknown uſurps my breaſt;
Back to the world my thoughts are led,
My feet in Folly's lab'ryinth tread,
And fancy dreams that life is bleſt.

How weak an empreſs is the mind,
Whom Pleaſure's flow'ry wreaths can bind,
And captive to her altars lead!
Weak Reaſon yields to Phrenzy's rage,
And all the world is Folly's ſtage,
And all that act are fools indeed.

And yet this ſtrange, this ſudden flight,
From gloomy cares to gay delight,
This fickleneſs, ſo light and vain,
In life's deluſive tranſient dream,
Where men nor things are what they ſeem,
Is all the real good we gain.